Library Use Only

The Musket

LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT-RUN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1969

Page 6
Gabe Lee Wins LHS Concerto Competition

Page 7
LHS Track Team Adjusts to Covid Regulations

Volume LXIV Issue III—March 2022

French Exchange Students Visit Switzerland

■ Shreya Kesarwani
Isabella Schulte
Staff Writers

From Feb. 15 to 26, a select group of Lexington High School students will live with host families in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, as part of the French exchange trip. As they travel to destinations such as Geneva, Gruyere, and the Alps, the participants hope to gain a new perspective on inclusivity and French culture, in addition to improving their linguistic abilities.

This year, the French exchange students will focus on inclusivity throughout their trip, both in the U.S. and Switzerland. They plan to create a project based on their new discoveries from group discussions and conversations with experts.

"We are going to visit Parliament and speak with some officials there. We are going to go to the U.N to speak with folks there," Beckie 'Brankin' Rankin, French teacher and organizer of the exchange program, said.

The students will focus on specific populations, and hope to gain a deeper understanding of them.

"There are groups of folks who are looking into different types of inclusion, like women in politics or LGBTQ+ folks in sports … Everything else that we are doing is through that lens of trying to figure out how we are going to be more inclusive," Brankin said.

In addition to a focus on inclusivity, students hope to develop near fluency in the French language by immersing themselves with their host families.

"The biggest benefit [of the trip] is [being able] to increase our linguistic abilities. Students are fully immersed for the eleven days that we are traveling," Brankin said.

Their host families will also provide a sense of community in the unfamiliar environment. The LHS students have already started to develop relationships with their exchange students.

"[I am most looking forward to] meeting my exchange student because we have been talking over text since last summer and I am just really excited to see her in person," Anushka Bhagwat, a senior participating in the French exchange trip, said.

Staff photo by Sujin Lee
Annual French Exchange, NeuLex, plans its trip to Neuchâtel, Switzerland

However, the planning of the trip has not been without challenges, especially due to the ongoing pandemic.

"I was trying to not get my hopes up because it seemed like we might not have been able to go or maybe one school could travel and the other couldn't," Bhagwat said.

The organizers of the trip hope to provide students with a formative experience, allowing them to obtain new perspectives that will resonate even after the trip's duration.

"The main piece of this exchange that people take on beyond their high school years is interpersonal communication—gaining someone else's perspective and understanding that things can look differently from different angles," Brankin said.

Lexettes Compete in Poland

■ Nikhita Prasad
Nora Kapoor
Staff Writers

From Jan. 5-8, the Lexettes, a synchronized figure skating team based in Lexington, competed in the Hevelius Cup, an international skating competition in Poland. After competing for two days against teams from the Netherlands, Finland, and Russia, the Lexettes finished fourth overall.

Due to the pandemic, the team was unable to compete internationally for the past two years. This year, the team was able to compete overseas after agreeing to take certain travel and health precautions.

"We had to have a negative test, be fully vaccinated, and [take a] test before leaving. We tried to keep our bubble as a team so that none of us would get sick," Miu Hagio, a junior at Lexington High School and a member of the Lexettes, said.

The competition in Poland was both the team's first large-scale event in two years, but also the team's first international competition with its new members.

"The rink was much larger than we were used to training in, so it did add a little to the intimidation. Obviously, there was also a drastic change in environment, being surrounded by teams from all over the world speaking all different languages, but everyone was overall pretty welcoming and friendly to each other," Julien Song, a senior and a member of the Lexettes, said.

The Lexettes recognize that their strong fourth place finish was a result of the team's resilience and determination during setbacks.

"We had a few falls in both of our programs and didn't have the best skate, but we didn't let it get to our heads and were able to recover well. You could clearly tell that we fought to push through the obstacles and had improved our programs a lot since our last competition back in November, which we are very proud of," Song said.

Though the two days of competition were intense, the Lexettes learned the importance of teamwork and perseverance.

"From frustrating practices and sleep-deprived nights, to locker room karaoke and winning medals, my teammates and I have gone through it all together. Being able to have all twenty of my friends' unconditional support and love through every high and low is a privilege and joy like no other," Song said.

Subscribe to our Newspaper here: bit.ly/musketsubscribers

Hackett Considers 7-Block Schedule for 2023-2024

Vivian Wang
Toshio Yuki
Staff Writers

Julie Hackett, the Lexington Public Schools superintendent, is considering implementing a new, 7-block schedule for the 2023-2024 school year. For Lexington High School students who are currently enrolled in over seven classes each year, this may entail significant changes to class length and elective requirements.

The schedule is in its early stages and its approval depends upon a collective agreement among students, teachers, administrators, and faculty members.

"[The implementation of the new schedule] won't be happening anytime soon. But right now, the kind of communication is between Dr. Stephens and Jennifer Godet… After they come up with a plan, it'll probably have a lot of teacher feedback, union feedback, and then community feedback from parents and from students. There'll definitely be a community input team that's composed of all of the people that would be impacted," Sara Mei, a senior and LHS school committee representative, said.

While the discussion of a new schedule is an ongoing process, the administration hopes to meet the state requirement of yearly time on learning, and address inequities at LHS.

"Right now at the high school, our juniors and seniors don't meet that [time on learning] because of the open campus policy. While we're working on time on learning, we're also embedding in some of the student equity and teacher equity concerns that have been going on for quite some time now," Mei said.

One notable feature being considered is a designated period in the schedule for certain clubs and activities. The opportunity for students to pursue extracurriculars during the school day excites some LHS staff members.

"If you can incorporate [clubs and activities] into the school day, that provides better opportunities for everybody to participate, and it will be easier for clubs to get advisors. [Students are] doing something extracurricular that's not academic, but also brings value to [their] school experience," Caroline Fantasia, an English teacher, said.

While some students are optimistic about the opportunity to incorporate new features and adjustments into the school day, others are concerned with the impact that longer class periods will have on already-high workloads.

"I'm assuming that longer blocks means more homework each night. A lot of LHS students are already stressed and overworked, so I just think that might be a problem. I hope that, if the administration does decide to end up switching to a 7-block schedule, they can consider adding some restrictions to keep the work manageable for students," Zoe Gray, a junior, said.

Others hope that the administration will take this opportunity to improve weaknesses in the current schedule. This includes the 90 minute-long lunch block, which many students and teachers alike hope to eliminate from future schedules.

"I feel like classes are generally a good length except for the one really long lunch block. Sitting through it is always hard," Gray said. "It would be nice if they cut that block up somehow or gave us a little more time to eat."

Although the status of the proposed schedule is up in the air, students are hoping that the reformed 2023-2024 schedule will add to their overall experience at LHS.

"I just hope that whatever they end up choosing, they'll consider how it will affect students and teachers who are under stress… and of course, also COVID restrictions," Gray said.

2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results Released

Jessica Liu
Sahana Behera
Staff Writers

On Feb. 3, 2021, Lexington High School administered the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to students. The survey, which collects data on topics including mental health, substance abuse, and bullying, is used to measure behavioral trends among middle and high school students. This anonymous survey is administered every other year to gain insight into the health and safety of the LHS community. For instance, the most recent survey included questions pertaining to the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

The results revealed that 81.1% of LHS students said they were spending more time on social media, playing video games, or watching movies, videos, and television. It also highlighted how almost 60% of students reported feeling more lonely, since they were spending less time with friends. Additionally, 50% of students said that they felt sad or depressed more often.

"My mental health has gone a little bit down because of being stuck at home and social media. That has affected my view of myself and other people," Grace Wang, a sophomore, said.

For others, the time spent at home alleviated their stress.

"It actually improved my mental health, because school became not as stressful. There wasn't as much homework and the transition from middle school to high school wasn't as bad," Ivy Tang, a sophomore, said.

The survey's anonymous format encourages students to be more truthful in their responses, allowing the YRBS to collect accurate differing opinions on student life. However, its statistics may be inaccurate since some respondents may respond falsely to questions.

"If some people do things they don't really think they are supposed to be doing, they might not answer honestly," Tang said.

It is important to recognize response bias when interpreting the survey results to get an accurate picture of the LHS community.

The Joint School Committee & School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) held meetings to address disparities and trends in the responses. Results were compared with those of other public schools in the state and national data. The survey data is used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the LHS environment, providing valuable insight into what improvements could be made within the community.

An aspect that was identified for LHS to improve upon is the bullying that the LGBTQ+ community faces. According to the data collected by the YRBS, 13.4% of LGBTQ+ students were bullied on school property, compared to 4.3% of non-LGBTQ+ students.

The efforts taken by the committee to identify key issues are partly recognized by the student body, while others are doubtful about whether these efforts enact actual change.

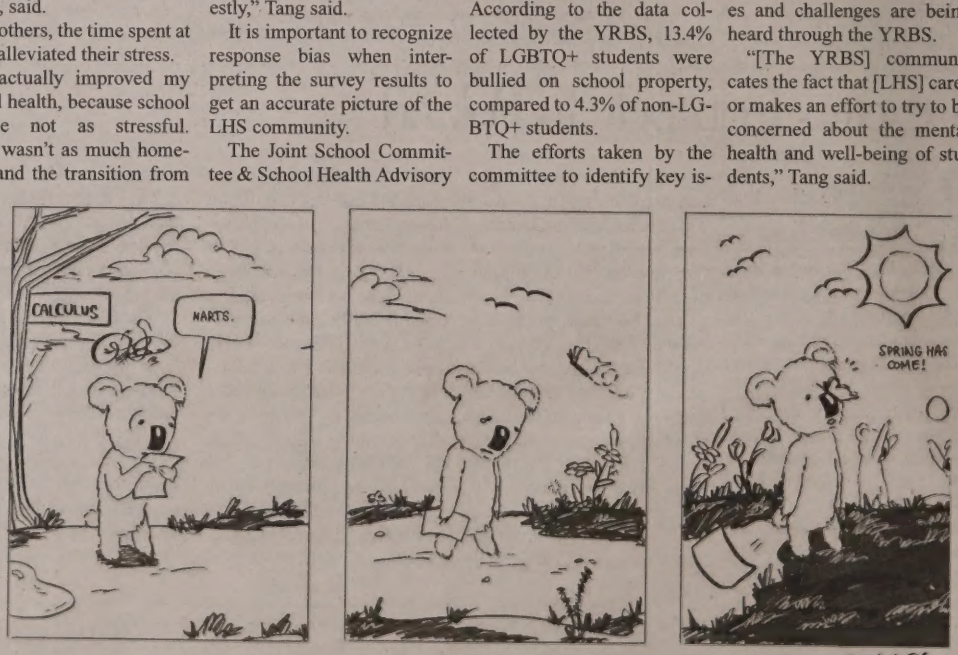
"I think we put out a good effort to help with these issues but I'm not sure if it actually works," Wang said.

Despite this, the survey does identify key issues, such as the high levels of stress among students and disparities among certain subgroups.

As a result, some students do feel like their voices and challenges are being heard through the YRBS.

"[The YRBS] communicates the fact that [LHS] cares or makes an effort to try to be concerned about the mental health and well-being of students," Tang said.

Spring has Sprung



Featured Artist, Illustration by Rachel Chen

LHS's Response to the Omicron Variant

Disha Sankholar
Gaeun Suh
Staff Writers

On Dec. 21, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health reinforced a mask mandate for several venues in response to the spread of new COVID-19 variants. Over the past few weeks, the surge of the highly-contagious Omicron variant has led state and local districts to tighten regulation protocols.

After winter break, Omicron cases surged as many residents reunited with their families and friends. Cases multiplied when schools started in early January, leading to an unusually high number of student and teacher absences. Schools that had anticipated absences extended the break for an extra day so students and teachers could acquire proper masks and get tested before returning to school.

However, with the recent shortage of testing kits, state officials cannot meet increasing testing demands. Thus, the state recommends getting tested only after displaying symptoms of the virus or five or more days after exposure to another individual who has contracted the disease.

To minimize the demand for PCR tests, Governor Baker also stressed positive results on rapid/at-home COVID-19 tests do not need to be confirmed with PCR tests. Instead, positive results should be followed by five days of quarantine. Students can return to school after the fifth day, but must wear masks indoors and outdoors for ten days.

With the shortage of testing kits, the demand for highly protective masks, such as N95s and KN95s have increased. These masks are particularly difficult to acquire, leaving many families to resort to counterfeits.

"Fake masks feel like a consequence of what the pandemic has become, where individuals and companies have realized how much they can profit off of families in need," Anna Kozlova, a senior at Lexington High School, said.

Those who purchase "fake" masks may believe they are of good quality when in reality these masks have not been tested and provide minimal protection. For this reason, people are becoming more vigilant by ensuring that their masks are labeled as "medical-grade" and are effective at protecting against the virus.

"I have heard about fake masks, especially those pertaining to the KN95/N95. When my family buys masks now, we check where they come from, the reviews, whether or not it's certified, etc.," Alaia Garcia Mariscal, a junior, said.

Although these lower quality masks are not ideal, they do provide some level of protection.

"Preventing germs from spreading as widely as they do with no face covering is still important, and if people have to do that with a fake mask, whether it be because they can't afford the real thing [or because] they can't distinguish them… it's better than nothing," Kozlova said.

Despite new testing protocols, many students think the precautions taken at school could be implemented better.

"One of the biggest things that I and my peers that I've talked to think is that the lunch setup could be better. There is simply not enough space in the gym, field house, and commons to social distance. If there were more areas around the school with smaller spaces or outside with heaters, I think that would help not only with the spread, but with our worries," Garcia-Mariscal said.

LHS Encourages Pooled Testing Participation

Staff photo by Sujin Lee
LPS Pooled Testing Kits Available Around LHS

Anagha Chakravarti
Zahra Karim
Staff Writers

Last year, the nursing department worked with Mirimus Clinical Labs to implement a pooled testing program at Lexington High School in order to keep the school safe and open during the pandemic. As the Omicron variant surges, students continue to have the option to participate.

Students can pick up testing kits every Tuesday outside of any Dean office, in the Main Hallway, outside the nurses' office or in the Commons. They then return their testing kit to the same locations the following morning.

Once the samples are collected, they are separated into groups to undergo testing. If a specific group tests positive, they perform another test to find which sample among the group is positive, and continue doing so until the sample is identified. Before students can participate in the program, they need to complete an online consent form. On the LPS & COVID19 website, students can find the form, learn more about the program, and watch a video on how to take their saliva sample.

"It's actually really convenient, you just scan the barcode and you're fine. It's pretty simple, pretty straightforward," Muztaba Syed, a freshman who regularly participates in the pooled testing program, said.

However, setting up the program with the laboratory, and increasing participation in the program has proven to be difficult for the LHS nurses.

"One of the challenges is getting people to test, both staff and students. So we've had to do a lot of outreach and encouragement in the community and in the schools," Suzan Kaftan, a nurse at LHS said.

The safety and security component of the program ensures the success of the program among the LHS student body.

"It just gives a sense of security like you get to make sure every week. Also they request that you do it, so it helps the school, and it helps keep everyone safe," Syed said.

Students who chose to opt out of the program agree that the benefits of the program include preventing the spread of COVID-19, especially with the current surge in cases.

"You are able to know your results daily and it creates a safe environment for everyone. And also with the rise in COVID cases, it helps to get tested earlier since some may not experience symptoms," Maisha Afia, a junior who does not participate in the pooled testing program, said.

Students believe that there is room for improvement with regards to the program's availability and student participation.

"I think just having the testing kits available to everyone in more locations because sometimes they run out. Sometimes they're hard to find, sometimes you forget to drop them off. Maybe more reminders, and making it more accessible to everyone would encourage more participation," Muztaba said.

Questions? Comments? Email us at musketnews@gmail.com

Monthy Early-Release Days: Effective or Defective?

Audi Lin
Staff Writer

The growing pressures from a return to in-person learning have affected both students and teachers. In response, beginning in Nov. 2021, Lexington High School has implemented a monthly early-release day policy; one Friday each month, students are dismissed earlier while faculty members stay at school to collaborate with their colleagues or work independently. Overall, these early-release days have greatly helped students and staff, proving their effectiveness

For students, being released early has several benefits. Since the day is shorter, each class is condensed, and students seem to enjoy the change of pace it brings.

"The blocks are less learning and more project based. [Teachers will] have a shorter assignment for us to do just on that specific day rather than continuing through slideshows or extra learning," Sara Mei, a senior at LHS, said.

The half-day also gives students extra time in the afternoon, which can be used to catch up on work or relax with friends. This is especially useful with the recent surge of the Omicron variant since many students have had to quarantine at home. Rather than being left behind in class when they return to in-person learning, the half-day allows students to ask their teachers questions or make up assessments.

"A bunch of my friends are using that day as time that they can make up assessments, especially with COVID," Mei said, "Making up assessments is really helpful."

Many students also use half-days as an opportunity to unwind.

"Some of my friends, they really do appreciate being able to take that day and go to the center or go home early," Mei said .

Teachers also believe that the half-days are beneficial to students.

"Students can catch up on work, sleep, or socialize, read, get some sunlight, vitamin D, all of those things," Carrie Conlon, an English teacher at LHS, said.

Students aren't the only ones reaping benefits. The transition to full-time in-person learning has also been difficult for teachers as teaching continuously throughout the day left less time for them to plan lessons and grade assessments.

"Last year was a hard schedule somehow, but it was also easy in the sense that I had plenty of time to plan," Conlon said. "And this year we're back to more of the old schedule. Things are moving so fast that my planning efficiency slipped a lot. It was just so different this year."

The additional half-days have given teachers extra time to catch up on work and ensure that they are prepared for class.

"The half days are giving me back time to meet with colleagues to co-plan, calibrate on timing of a unit, design lessons, and design assessments. It's been enormously helpful," Conlon said.

Despite the numerous benefits of the half-days, parents are concerned that the early release policy could decrease required time-on-learning. However, Julie Hackett, the superintendent of Lexington Public Schools, has said that in the current situation, early-release days do not interfere with learning standards.

Although these early-release days are scheduled through the current school year, they are unlikely to continue in the upcoming school years. But perhaps LHS desperately needs them, regardless of the global pandemic.

"For years, elementary schools have been doing a weekly half-day for the explicit reason that teachers need to get together with their teams and organize, streamline, and develop curriculum. And at the high school, we've never had that, and we need it just as much. So I think it's a no-brainer to keep it personally," Conlon said.

Even though this school year has been challenging, teachers will still need the extra time to collaborate with fellow staff post-COVID-19. Considering the immense benefits early-release days have brought to students and staff alike, LHS should consider their continuation into future years.

Do Students Feel Safe Right Now With the Pandemic?

Sreenidhi Dharmaraj
Staff Writers

Navigating through the pandemic has been difficult for both students and school administrators. As the country experiences its next surge in cases with the Omicron variant, school districts are reevaluating measures to protect the community.

Lexington Public Schools has authorized a variety of policies and programs to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, according to Kathleen Lenihan, the chair of the School Committee. These measures include a mask mandate, a test-to-stay program, pooled surveillance testing, and a new lunch schedule for Lexington High School students.

Despite these measures, some LHS students still feel unsafe at school. Part of their unease comes from observed failures in following and regulating social distancing guidelines.

"It's more about social distancing—not hugging people [or] having big crowds—because ultimately, no space between people is what causes more cases," Nana Lee, a junior, said.

Emily Wang, a junior, expressed her concern for crowded areas around the school during passing time and lunch blocks when students are often in close contact..

"I don't see the schools trying to do much about making things less crowded," Wang said. "We have such a huge campus, it's hard to get places with so many people. It's just really difficult to get by and that causes a lot of crowding."

Although the school has added a fourth lunch period to minimize crowds, overcrowding in common lunch spots still poses safety issues. Wang describes her alarm while walking past the gym.

"Everybody has their masks off. And, I know people don't want to have to clean up the gym floor, so that's why [students] don't sit on the gym floors, but it's so crowded there," Wang said. "You take one look at it, and that's not even close to being COVID safe."

Even though students do not feel completely safe at LHS, LPS has developed a relatively safe environment with the resources at hand.

"I would rate LPS' response highly," Lenihan said. "I think we've done about as well as we can, which isn't necessarily very satisfying because sometimes, as well as you can, isn't very good."

Some students at LHS echo this sentiment.

"I feel like Lexington has done the most that they can with the restrictions instated," Lee said.

To improve LPS' response, some are calling for more drastic actions, like implementing a remote system and strictly enforcing safety measures.

However, Lenihan said that the decision to go back to a remote learning system was not simply up to the town. This year the state and the commissioner of the Department of Education and Secondary Education (DESE) have discounted remote learning as a valid mode of learning. In other words, time spent in remote learning would not contribute to the number of learning time required for students.

"This is beyond the level of local control. This lies with those state bodies, and they're very clear about what they want to see happen," Lenihan said.

While the administration may not be able to implement a remote learning system, they can certainly tighten safety regulations around the high school to better address the concerns of the student body. Establishing consequences for those who wear their masks incorrectly may be a good next step.

It is crucial to validate those students who may be worried about contracting the virus and spreading it to other friends and family members who may be vulnerable. One thing Lexington has done well, however, is sticking together and understanding that residents must help each other.

"It's really hard as parents, seeing your children struggle, and we're just really appreciative of all the support that the students have shown wearing the masks when they don't want to, participating in pool testing, and realizing we're all in this together," Lenihan said.

More content at lhsmusket.com

AP Psychology Teacher Launches Speaker Series

Alexis Chen
Devangi Rathi
Staff Writers

Staff photo by Olivia Hoover
AP Psychology teacher Ms. Darling

In the summer of 2020, Tammy Darling, a psychology teacher at Lexington High School, initiated an AP Psychology Speaker Series on adolescent identity development. The purpose of the series was to share beneficial tools from social psychology to help students during their high school experience.

Darling has taught AP Psychology for two decades, earning her master's degree in Psychology. Her speaker series is part of her doctoral program, which she started in 2020 at Northeastern University.

"Telling students to take good care without any tools and strategies is kind of like saying: here's a bunch of two-by-fours, why don't you build yourself a house," Darling said.

Darling's concerns regarding the absence of quality information about student well-being led her to pilot the First Year Community program. This program intended to help middle schoolers transition to high school, and high schoolers develop a healthy lifestyle .

"I think that there is a seismic shift from middle to high school, and I think that there are tools and strategies from psychology that students can try on. It's not prescriptive, and it's empirically backed so that students have tools and strategies to deploy and can tap into this neural hub of things that can help them live their version of their best life," Darling said.

First Year Community had three components: recruiting incoming freshmen, engaging them in five self-paced activities organized by researchers, and hosting a speaker series.

"The speakers are made up of scholars whose work I've admired who are now friends of mine. I reached out to them last year and said, 'Listen, I'm piloting something, is there any way for you to spend 40 minutes to an hour with high school students to share some insights as a scholar of psychology, of things you wished you knew as a high schooler?' And so they all had their own area of expertise," Darling said.

However, due to the pandemic, participation rates dropped.

"My first speaker series, only seven of the 33 students who were involved in First Year Community signed up. This is behavioral science at its best, so I opened it up to my AP Psych classes," Darling said.

The turnout has increased significantly since Darling opened up the program to her students.

"It's been so successful, and there's been a couple with an attendance of over 70 students on a Thursday night, once a month, that I'm hoping to continue that next year," Darling said.

The presentations conducted by speakers equip students with a set of tools and strategies that are necessary through and beyond high school.

"There are a lot of students who find deep purpose in thinking broadly about who they are, and their space in this social world, and this psychology course is unique in giving them the opportunity to do that, to think more deeply about humanity. I don't think you can measure that impact, and I just think that this class teaches you how to be a better person. The impact is endless," Darling said.

Singing Valentines Return In-Person

Seiya Saneyoshi
Jahnavi Bolledula
Staff Writers

On Feb. 14, 2022, Singing Valentines returned to Lexington High School. Quartets of LHS students serenaded other students as they did pre-pandemic, while still adapting to COVID-19 protocols.

Due to the pandemic, Singing Valentines were conducted remotely last year. Members of Singing Valentines groups created videos for recipients, and auditions and rehearsals were held remotely, as well. This year, singers will be able to sing in-person in classrooms, but will wear masks and maintain a six foot distance from others.

"It was really nice to see everybody in-person and even though we had masks on it felt like we were kind of getting back to some sense of normalcy," Saanvi Mammai, a member of one of the quartets, said.

To become a member of one of the Singing Valentine groups, auditionees were required to reenact what they would do in a classroom when the time came to perform.

"So the way auditions work, you prepare a solo... the group song and a pickup line, and you do them as eight with two people on a part and then you do them with four walking around the person in the chair. And then you sing your solo," Lila Sandler, a junior and member of one of the quartets, said.

Another audition requirement includes preparing a pickup line. Ellie Caro, a junior member of Singing Valentines, referenced a pickup line her sister Christina Caro used.

"Are you a Carole King musical? Because you're beautiful.' It was very sweet," Caro said.

Purchases for Singing Valentines began a week before Valentine's Day. Senders were able to purchase a Singing Valentine during lunch and customize it, choosing whether they want an all-female, all-male, or mixed group of singers to deliver the valentine. They could also opt to send a note to the recipient of the Singing Valentine.

On Valentine's Day, the quartets followed a schedule based on the information given from the sender.

"At the end of the block, if we have time, we can visit other teachers or other students we want to sing for. And that's really fun, too," Mammai said.

In the weeks leading up to the performances, members of the Singing Valentine quartets looked forward to the preparation and practice needed for the event.

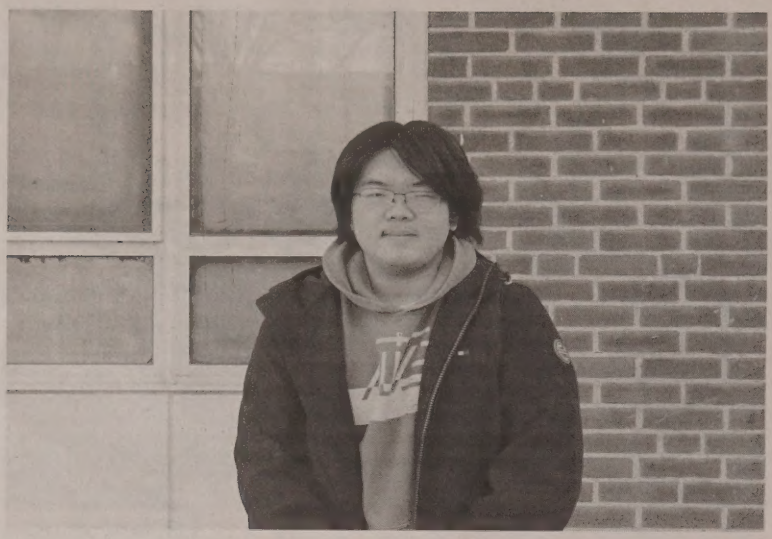
"The actual planning and getting the tickets, and creating our schedules, within the whole process of itself is going to be really fun leading up to the actual day," Mammai said.

By performing in-person Singing Valentines, the singers hope to leave a more positive and long-lasting impact on the recipients compared to the previous year.

"I always feel like it's better to see a performance in person than virtually. And as a performer you feel that as well. So this year, I think it'll have a much bigger impact on people and I think everyone misses it," Mammai said.

Check out our instagram: @lexmusket

Artist of the Issue: Gabe Lee Wins LHS Concerto Competition



Staff photo by Natalie Schroder
Student artist: Cellist Gabe Lee

■ Sapphire Wang
Tara Pai
Staff Writers

Gabe Lee, a junior cellist in Lexington High School's Chamber Orchestra won the 2021 LHS Concerto Competition, and will perform his winning piece with the Chamber Orchestra in Nov. 2022.

The Concerto Competition began with an open round, in which participants submitted a three minute video of them playing a concerto of their choice with their instrument of expertise. Ten finalists advanced to the second round of the competition, where the overall winner was determined.

"It was kind of on my own accord to just sign up for the concerto competition and sort of practice on my own," Lee said.

Lee won by playing his favorite piece: Dmitri Shostakovitch's Cello Concerto No. 1. In his free time, Lee blends classical and contemporary music, frequently pairing his cello skills with beatboxing. He composed a beatboxing-cello medley in his composing class and cites Kevin Olusola, the beatboxer of the a capella group Pentatonix, as his musical inspiration.

"I watched enough of his videos to learn how to play cello and beatbox at the same time, so I think that's something I feel is more unique about me that I like to be proud of," Lee said.

Lee is also heavily influenced by his family. His father graduated from a music college, and his older brother, a violinist, won the Concerto Competition when Lee was a freshman.

"My freshman year, I did the concerto competition and then I made it to the finalist round, but I didn't win. But my brother won so I thought that was cool," Lee said.

Lee is interested in pursuing music in college and professionally.

"I hope I can release an EP sometime in my life. I am also thinking about auditioning for music college, maybe get a few performance opportunities along the way as well, and hopefully get a stable job in music production," Lee said.

Since the beginning of his musical journey, Lee has grown under the guidance of his private teacher, "Mr. G", who also teaches at Manchester Community Music School.

"He just helps me a lot with being interested in music … Somehow, I never really tell him about competitions. It's just like, I'll see what I do with this and then if I win I'll tell him, right?" Lee said.

LHS Illustration Club Hosts Pop-Up Art Store

■ Medha Jayendran
Sophia Zhang
Staff Writers

From Dec. 20 to 23, Lexington High School's Illustration Club opened a pop-up art store in the display room by the LHS main entrance.

The shop was open to all students and visitors during lunch blocks and after school, selling a variety of products and artworks made by the club's members. Popular items include Genshin Impact designs, animated cartoons, stickers, jewelry, canvas paintings, and papyrus papers.The pop-up shop raised over $1,000. 75% of the profit was allocated among the respective artists, while the remaining 25% was kept to fund materials for the club. In addition to fundraising, the pop-up shop allowed club members to gain feedback on their art.

"It's important for artists to have an opportunity to sell their artwork as an experience in the art world, and in knowing what people are interested in, what parts of them are most popular, what needs to be improved upon," Maya Silverman, a senior and leader of the Illustration Club, said.

Many club members characterized the opportunity to sell their art as a valuable learning experience.

"For me, it's an experience of how to sell art in the real world, market things and to collaborate with others as well," Jack Chen, a member of the Illustration Club, said.

Another club member and contributor to the pop-up shop shared a similar opinion.

"I guess I didn't really care about how much I got paid, but at least selling one sticker was enough because… I could start seeing how to sell my own products of art," Christy Gu, a freshman, said.

Selling art also gave club members another reason to create art.

"The idea of being able to make art… that people would be interested in buying, kind of gives you the motivation to create it," Gu said.

Staff photo by Angie Xu
Students in the Illustration Club drawing during a studio day

The club leaders are hoping for the pop-up shop to return in the spring.

"Especially since art is such a variable profession, you can do a lot of different things. This is one example of a foray into the art world," Oliver Goss, a senior and club leader, said.

Overall, the artists believe the pop-up shop was a positive experience and hope to continue the event in future years.

"I think if there's a Pop-up shop for next year and like any more within this year, I will probably make something for it because it was a positive experience," Gu said.

LHS Drama Department Hosts Winterfest

Margot Bordman
Janya Utkarsh
Staff Writers

On Feb. 11 and 12, Lexington High School hosted Winterfest—a showcase featuring student-created works. In previous years, a group of students called the Emerson Troupe wrote an original piece and performed it at the Emerson College High School Drama Festival. However, due to COVID-19 concerns, the festival could not take place at Emerson this year.

Winterfest consisted of three performances: the Emerson Troupe, a one-act play written by senior Allanna Chung, and the LHS Improv Troupe.

To prepare for the final performance, the different student-led troupes rehearsed twice a week.

"We devise a piece based off an idea that our director, the incredible Ms. Kalivas, presents to us. We then spend the first few rehearsals bouncing around ideas, coming up with a storyline, and then breaking off into groups to work on the script in chunks," Ellie Caro, an LHS junior and three-time Emerson trouper, said.

In the midst of a pandemic, the customary procedures have changed to accommodate public safety.

"In a normal year, it's a very cozy and compact environment and the energy buzzes throughout the space, but due to COVID the capacity of how many audience members we can host has been cut down," Caro said.

Though there were many challenges, the actors, writers, and everyone involved found ways to make the show a bonding experience.

"I love the group dynamic. The whole reason I love theater is because of the people involved and the work we create… I don't know what I would do without my theater family," Caro said.

Director Carly Kalivas also expressed her fondness of the tight-knit sense of community during rehearsals.

"My favorite part of the rehearsal process is being in a room full of wonderfully collaborative and creative people. These devised works would never happen without the incredible humans who dedicate their time and energy to the process," Kalivas said.

Though it has been challenging for everyone involved, participants have adapted to new restrictions, including masking requirements, when preparing for the show.

"Acting in masks has unique challenges for expression and articulation, though working in a more intimate space like the Black Box helps a lot," Kalivas said.

Despite the hurdles, the students and teachers showcased their work and performances at Winterfest, which continues to be a tenet of the LHS Drama department.

Sports

LHS Track Team Adjusts to COVID Regulations

Elias Tamer
Ishaan Tiperneni
Staff Writers

This year, the Lexington High School indoor track team successfully navigated the numerous challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the boys team has a winning record of 4-0-1, while the girls team record is 4-1.

"We tied Reading who were our rivals and they beat us last year so that's better than a loss, and we're hoping to beat them at the league meet," Evan Eberle, a senior and captain of the boys' team, said.

While the team is off to a strong start, the season isn't over yet. The coaches of the track team remain optimistic about the early season.

"The success has been good, but it's only January and there is still a lot of improvement to be made even though the kids are running very, very well right now," Emmett O'Brien, the head coach of the girls' team, said.

Many members attributed the team's success to the strong leadership of the coaches and captains.

"[The captains] are role models in the sense of how they behave on the track and off. They have tremendous work ethics which underclassmen can emulate as they watch their captains train. The captains are the ones who lead them out to all these meets. They have great words of wisdom before the meets start," O'Brien said.

Eberle also highlighted the coaches' willingness to help everyone on the team.

"They all have similar goals for what they want the team to succeed and they do a good job of helping everybody achieve those goals. And even if someone isn't scoring points on varsity, they're still willing to take the time to help them get better," Eberle said.

This year's track season greatly differed from previous years due to the pandemic. Several changes include the team's cautionary stance about players' health during practices and competitions.

"We have had numerous emails saying 'I don't feel well' and we tell them to stay home, we don't want anybody who even thinks they have something wrong to come to practice and spread it. We are just being very cautious," O'Brien said.

Coaches have been especially adamant about remaining masked when both practicing and competing. This mandate was heavily emphasized by the coaches of the track team.

"We have to wear a mask at all times during practice and meets. When you're racing you're allowed to drop your mask below your nose and even your mouth sometimes because it would be hard for them to breathe. But, when we are in the field house the kids are wearing their masks on at all times, even during training," O'Brien said.

In response to the mask mandate, Alexander Lau, a sophomore and short distance runner, spoke about how athletes have been impacted by the new regulations.

"I think everyone is just a bit more tired after running because we have to wear a mask. But besides that, I don't think it has a dramatic impact on times," Lau said.

Despite the safety measures put in place, several athletes expressed the concern of contracting COVID-19.

"I'm just worried to catch COVID because we're spending so much time in an indoor space with 80 to 100 people and sometimes when people are running, their masks fall down below their nose or mouth and that might expose people," Lau said.

Staff photo by Angie Xu
Mid and long distance track athletes doing a workout outside

Other athletes also shared how the pandemic has negatively affected the team's attendance at practices.

"It's just a big team and we've had a lot of kids who've had to take a step back due to COVID. A lot of kids have gotten it. I missed a few days because I was a close contact," Eberle said.

Despite the concerns caused by COVID-19, the indoor track team continues to succeed.

"These kids are running really, really well and throwing well and jumping well so they are stepping up to the challenge, they are not letting it defeat them or let it inhibit them from improving," O'Brien said.

Athlete of the Issue: Clara Fu Commits to Hamilton

Staff photo by Michael Gordon
Clara Fu stands in front of the Lexington Fieldhouse

■ Pranav Chivukula
Alex Lau
Staff Writers

Lexington High School senior Clara Fu has committed to run in Hamilton College's Division III program next year. At LHS, Fu runs cross country and track, competing during both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

Fu first found her love for running in seventh grade through competitive swimming where she used dryland exercises to improve her swimming performance.

"My favorite part of swimming was dryland where we ran laps. Then, I was like, 'oh there is a whole sport for this,' and then I just joined the track team at Clarke," Fu said.

Since then, Fu has dedicated herself to running, specializing in long distance events, such as the 5K in cross country and the Two-Mile in indoor track.

"I personally like the longer distance, because I think that's what I'm stronger at. I like being able to pace myself. " Fu said.

Fu also shared the difficulties that she experienced during her track journey.

"I do go through ups and downs mentally and do go through some motivation struggles sometimes. However, in those cases I would take a couple days to rest, and take it easy on myself, and slowly work my way back to being motivated again," Fu said.

She's found that running brings her relaxation and peace despite its active nature.

"I feel like running really helps clear my mind, it's pretty relaxing, even though that's activity." Fu said.

Fu aims to improve her personal bests before she heads off to New York for college.

"With each meet, my goal is to do better than last time. [Personal Record] wise, my goal is to go under 11:30 minutes in the two mile. In general, my goal is just to be a stronger runner," Fu said.

Columns

LHS & Productivity Culture

■ Austin Li
Technology Columnist

Productivity is a treasured quality amongst Lexington High School students. You can find freshmen spending hours under a desk lamp on the third floor of Cary Memorial Library, or a group of students scrambling to finish their homework before the bell rings in Commons I. Regardless of the situation, the goal is to complete as much work as possible in the most efficient way. However, sitting in the school library during a free, one student takes their eyes off their YouTube video to see the kid next to them hard at work on next week's Chemistry homework. What's the difference between these two students?

The most common approach to increase productivity comes in the form of strategizing and using various studying methods proven to increase "focus" and "work rate". I've dabbled in my own share of productivity tactics: creating a delegated study space, attempting the Pomodoro study method, setting up Notion to organize my workspace, downloading Google Keep to keep track of tasks, and installing an endless list of chrome extensions. Each of these additions aimed to eliminate as many small distractions as possible.

Every time I learned a new "strategy" of focus, I became excited to implement it: I planned two weeks ahead for my English essay, brainstormed study guides with multiple subsections, and overbooked myself everyday. Shortly after using the new strategy, it would lose its appeal. Notion simply became a visually pleasing environment with nothing beyond that. The Pomodoro technique lost its fervor in the 25 minutes of intense focus. Each small distraction returned to the surface, leaving the same unachievable desire for productivity.

Surprisingly, it was the "newness" of these strategies that made them effective; contrary to the way they improved my studying approach. What restricts productivity isn't the ability to see the work we do in a new, fun light. Everyone in their lives will have to be able to work through moments where they are not passionate about a subject—discovering the ability to be productive in these moments is a true skill.

Finding some sort of inner motivation for work is a far greater challenge beyond completing daily homework assignments. Students' interest in eliminating all distractions to their productivity is useless working towards an impossible goal. Maybe a better mindset is one of resistance: rather than trying to get rid of a distraction, we can work on preventing our minds from being tempted by it. True productivity arises from an understanding that we aren't just checking off boxes in a to-do list, but that there must be a greater idea about what we want to complete.

Musket Staff
2021-2022

Editors-in-Chief
Avni Kamat
Claire Pak

News Editors
Daisy Li
Vidula Mannem

A&E Editor
Victoria Yuan

Features Editor
Sarah Liu

Photo Editors
Michael Gordon
Olivia Hoover

Sports Editor
Ellen Wang

Opinion Editor
Joanna Liu
Michael Gordon

Columns Editor
Alex Tang
Ria Vasishtha

Online Content Editors
Anika Basu
Angie Leung
Varun Suraj

Faculty Adviser
Ms. Agresti

Printing Services
School Paper Express

Staff Writers
Alex Lau
Alexis Chen
Anagha Chakravarti
Audi Lin
Berta Cassanova Ferrer
Devangi Rathi
Disha Sankholkar
Elias Tamer
Gaeun Suh
Isabella Schulte
Ishaan Tipirneni
Jahnavi Bolleddula
Janya Utkarsh
Jessica Liu
Lauren Wu
Margot Bordman
Medha Jayendran
Nikhita Prasad
Nora Kapoor
Pranav Chivukula
Rebecca Gu
Sahana Behera
Sapphire Wang
Seiya Saneyoshi
Shreya Kesarwani
Sophia Zhang
Sreenidhi Dharmaraj
Tara Pai
Vedanti Bhargava
Vivian Wang
Zahra Karim

Staff Photographers
Angie Xu
Natalie Schroeder
Reem Fares
Sydney Elliot
Sujin Lee

Layout Designers
Anvita Kalpande
Allison Ma

Columnists
Austin Li
Darren Tran
Pavan Cheruku
Talia Alperin
Tasneem Ghadiali

Editorial opinions in The Musket do not necessarily reflect the policies of Lexington High School or its administration.
Correspondence to The Musket c/o Lexington High School, 251 Waltham St., Lexington, MA 02421 or by email to musketnews@gmail.com. Short, tasteful responses are welcome.